

PDA Union responds to management's message to Superdrug pharmacists

Superdrug management are not used to dealing with trade unions and the information circulated does not reflect the reality of the other established and successful partnerships between the PDA Union and other pharmacy chains.

Some specific examples follow:

In the document, the management spokesperson said:	PDA Comment
<p><i>“....the latest updates as to where we are in the union recognition process with the <u>Pharmacy Defence Association (PDA)</u>”</i></p>	<p>The initials PDA stand for Pharmacists’ Defence Association, and it is a not-for-profit organisation set up by pharmacists and run by pharmacists to represent the views and the interests of pharmacists.</p> <p>This is an important distinction as unlike some “pharmacy” organisations that act in the interests of shareholders/owners, the PDA exists to exclusively represent the interests of individual pharmacists, including the important need to be able to care for their patients.</p> <p>The <u>PDA</u> was established in 2003 to enable pharmacists to have their own independent protection at work’ with the PDA Union being formed in 2008 to further advance the interests of pharmacists in the workplace, and it now has almost 40,000 members making it by far the largest pharmacists’ membership body in the UK.</p> <p>Now that the PDA exists, pharmacists have what doctors, radiographers, physiotherapists, midwives and other health professionals have had for a long time; an independent trade union acting on their behalf.</p>
<p><i>We believe we have good communication internally and welcome feedback via processes such as our Employee Engagement Survey and weekly calls with our teams.</i></p>	<p>Recognising a trade union does not prevent an employer from managing, or communicating, directly with their employees.</p> <p>If the PDA Union is recognised these communication channels can continue alongside Superdrug pharmacists having representation through their union which will independently act as their collective voice on certain issues of importance to them.</p> <p>In fact, millions of employees in the UK are working where management initiatives including employee surveys operate alongside those employees also being able to come together as a trade union.</p>

<p><i>If the PDA is recognised, you will lose the ability to negotiate individually with us, as the union will represent the collective interests of the bargaining unit on your behalf.</i></p>	<p>The union will typically negotiate minimum rates for a role which nobody can be paid less than, but individuals can still be paid more. As an example, this year pharmacists at Boots, acting together as the PDA Union, negotiated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £26.44 per hour as the minimum paid to all pharmacy managers, • £25.48 per hour as the minimum paid to pharmacists with 10+ years' service at the company <p>Though nobody can be paid less than a minimum, individuals can be paid more. The union routinely supports members to apply individually to their manager for mid-year pay increases when they are unhappy with their position on the pay scale for their job.</p> <p>Negotiating structures through the union increase transparency because these collective agreements are visible to all of the bargaining unit and pay scales are more transparent.</p> <p>Pay Scale transparency also mitigates against pay inequalities due to gender, race or other protected characteristics.</p>
<p><i>“The union will automatically represent you whether you like it or not.”</i></p>	<p>Every employed pharmacist in the bargaining unit would benefit from negotiations about pay increases, improvements to policies and from a strengthened health and safety framework which are all negotiated through the union.</p> <p>Individual advice about pay or any workplace issue such as bullying and harassment, to access our training programme or to have representation in internal processes such as disciplinary or grievance meetings, and external processes such as FTP hearings, are only available to PDA members.</p> <p>If you are not already a member you can join here: www.the-pda.org/join</p>
<p><i>“We know there are different circumstances in different pharmacies across the estate. Union recognition will not account for this.</i></p> <p><i>Everyone will be treated the same, regardless of your role, where you work, and your circumstances.</i></p>	<p>This statement is ill-informed.</p> <p>PDA Union activity at Superdrug will consider individual members working in different pharmacies and/or doing specific roles and we have extensive experience of pharmacy practice across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. As the pharmacy contract is devolved, there are national differences, as well as pharmacy sizes</p>

<p><i>We will not be able to make local decisions for individual employees, or small groups of employees for things like pay.”</i></p>	<p>and workload, services provided, staffing challenges and many other factors that vary between locations.</p> <p>This is not new for the PDA and such differences can be factored into discussions. PDA Union activity at Superdrug will be led by pharmacists employed by Superdrug. These volunteers will become legally entitled to paid time off for training and undertaking union duties once recognition is in place. They will be supported by the PDA Union team.</p> <p>In another contemporary example from Boots, the volunteer pharmacists trained as negotiators there, supported by PDA Union officials, secured an increased honorarium paid to tutors who are supporting trainee pharmacists which increased by 50% to £1,500 per year.</p>
<p><i>“Any action we want to take will likely have to go through lengthy negotiations, resulting in delays in taking action, having to alter our plans which could make some people worse off, or the union rejecting a proposal outright.”</i></p>	<p>Management at other community pharmacy businesses manage to negotiate pay with the PDA Union without it causing unnecessary delays or issues, and we believe that Superdrug’s senior management should also be capable of doing similar. For the past 5 years the Union has conducted efficient negotiations putting millions of pounds of additional pay into the pockets of pharmacists, which would not have been possible without union recognition.</p> <p>The Union has a flat structure, where key decisions are made quickly and it will be Superdrug pharmacists who will decide to accept or reject any proposals, not the Union. For example, it is not unusual for union negotiators to agree significant increases within 48 hours of negotiations first starting for some roles.</p> <p>Superdrug management currently can unilaterally impose any level of annual review without any collective scrutiny or feedback from pharmacists. Under a union recognition agreement proposals need to be explained, supported by evidence and can be challenged.</p> <p>In an environment where the union is negotiating, members will usually be asked their opinions before a pay claim is submitted, and a negotiated settlement proposal would normally be put to members in the bargaining unit to confirm acceptance before implementation. A recognition agreement will include an agreed timetable for when negotiations are to start and when they should conclude.</p>